

INDIANA AVENUE
(Louisiana Avenue)
Washington
District of Columbia

HABS NO. DC-713

HABS
DC
WASH,
608-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
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Department of the Interior
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

INDIANA AVENUE (Louisiana Avenue)

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Location: Indiana Avenue begins at the intersection of Seventh and C streets, NW, on the northeast corner of Market Square. It extends two blocks northeast to the southwest corner of Judiciary Square at the intersection of Fifth and D streets. Less than one block of the avenue remains between First and Second, C and D streets where two building facades preserve the line of the old right-of-way.

Owner/Manager: The right-of-way spanning from building line to building line is the property of the U.S. government; the paved roadways are under the jurisdiction of the District of Columbia Department of Public Works. Since the avenue falls within the Pennsylvania Avenue redevelopment area, the sidewalks and the planted areas are under the jurisdiction of the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation (PADC).

Present Use: Minor connecting roadway.

Significance: Although little remains of two roadways on L'Enfant's plan that were combined in the twentieth century as Indiana Avenue, both developed early as important city streets. The west segment, originally called Indiana Avenue, linked the center market to the city municipal buildings and residences that occupied the Judiciary Square neighborhood, and the segment to the east, called Louisiana Avenue was used as part of the route from Judiciary Square to the Capitol. The two blocks that remain are now within the National Register Pennsylvania Avenue Historic District and are being developed according to the plans of PADC.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of plan: 1791, L'Enfant Plan; 1792 Ellicott Plan.
2. Alterations and additions:
 - 1845: Congress authorized the grading and graveling of the segment between North Capitol and Third streets.
 - 1852: A brick culvert was constructed over the Tiber River at First Street.
 - 1872: The street south of Judiciary Square and the block between Judiciary Square and Third Street were paved with wood.
 - 1928-39: Federal Triangle construction closed all of avenue southwest of Seventh Street. The National Archives and the Department of Justice buildings were erected in the former right-of-way.
 - 1931: After Federal Triangle construction obliterated much of Louisiana Avenue, the remaining segment was renamed as part of Indiana Avenue, and the new road leading southwest from Union Station to the Mall was named Louisiana

Avenue.

- 1960-70s: Construction of the center leg of the Inner Loop Freeway (I-395) and the Department of Labor building eliminated the avenue between Second and Third streets.
- 1980s: Remaining two blocks of Indiana Avenue developed according to the PADC plan.

B. Historical Context:

The two remaining blocks of Indiana Avenue were once part of a larger thoroughfare probably known since about 1812 as Louisiana Avenue.¹ Little exists of the original Indiana Avenue, which extended from the southeast corner of Judiciary Square to First Street, NW. In 1931, the two avenues that meet on the south side of Judiciary Square were renamed as one, Indiana Avenue.

On L'Enfant's plan, the west segment of the roadway runs approximately 63 degrees northeast between the Mall and the south side of Judiciary Square and was intended to provide a vista between the site for a monument honoring George Washington and a site designated for a "large public edifice" at Fourth Street, NW. Although the actual right-of-way originates north of the canal along the north side of the Mall, L'Enfant designated an open vista through the greenery on the Mall southwest to the monument. At the mid point of this roadway is a large open square marked "E", indicated as a site for a grand cascade.

The east segment, known probably since the 1820s as Indiana Avenue, is also indicated on L'Enfant's plan as a two-block right-of-way running southeast from the site of the "large public edifice" at 112 degrees, mirroring the angle of the west segment.²

When Ellicott produced the engraved plan from L'Enfant's scheme, he removed L'Enfant's designations for fountains and structures along the west segment of the roadway, and extended the east leg for two more blocks to Delaware Avenue. As they were planned, the two roadways ran through property owned by David Burnes. The waters of the Goose, or Tiber, Creek as it wended through the city touched this avenue in two places, covering the two planned blocks at the southwest end of the west leg and crossing the east segment near First Street.³ As the avenues headed north from the creek bed, both climbed a slight incline as they approached the square between Fourth and Fifth streets set aside on L'Enfant's plan for Judiciary Square and purchased by the federal government as Appropriation No. 9.

Because of its proximity to Pennsylvania Avenue, the city's most important thoroughfare, the west leg, Louisiana Avenue, developed first. As early as 1801, a market house designed by James Hoban and Clotworth Stevens was built on the very low ground near its south end between Seventh and Ninth streets in Appropriation No. 7, a space purchased by the federal government for that purpose

¹ Louisiana was admitted to the Union as a state in 1812.

² Indiana was admitted to the Union as a state in 1821.

³ McNeil, 42-43; Hawkins, 18-19.

although L'Enfant had indicated it as the site of a fountain. It was sardonically referred to as "Marsh Market" because it was frequently flooded by the Tiber River.

Nevertheless, the market thrived and contributed to the development of the area as other businesses, such as the National Bank of Washington, located near this early commercial hub. As the Washington City Canal was built in the early 1800s, the southern two blocks of the avenue were reclaimed from the river, but remained relatively undeveloped due to the frequent flooding of the malodorous canal nearby.

The two roadways met at a horizontal street defining the south side of Appropriation No. 9 where a city hall designed by George Hadfield was built in 1820, despite the fact that the space was set aside for a federal judiciary building. The elegant structure prompted residential growth, and the east segment of the avenue soon developed as a convenient route to the Capitol building, prompting congressional authorization to grade and gravel the segment between North Capitol and Third streets in 1845. In 1852 a brick culvert was built over the Tiber River where it still crossed the avenue at First Street.

A map compiled in 1857-61, on the eve of the Civil War, shows the avenue lined with townhouses, such as the elegant Blagdon Row, built between Third and Fourth streets in 1852, and occupied by prominent people until its demolition in the 1930s. The map also indicates that the stretch of the roadway leading southeast to the Capitol was illuminated by gas streetlamps. By this time, the Unitarian Church, designed by Boston architect Charles Bulfinch north of the avenue at Sixth Street, had become a center for abolitionists in a city rife with southern sympathizers.⁴ When the war broke out, the church was one of the first buildings to be turned over to the Union troops for a hospital; damage done to the building during the war prompted the congregation to build another church farther northwest, so the dilapidated structure was razed in 1906.⁵

By the middle of the nineteenth century, both the market and the canal running along its south side had become offensive eyesores, so during the whirlwind of public works in the decade after the war, the canal was covered over and converted into a sewer and a new market, designed by Adolph Cluss, replaced the decaying complex of buildings. The new market was lauded as one of the best in the nation and continued to attract businesses to the area.

Prior to the Civil War the only public embellishment on the avenue was an enclosed triangular park east of the market. After his assassination, a statue of President Abraham Lincoln, sculpted by Lot Flannery, was erected atop a 40' column in the center of the road connecting Louisiana and Indiana avenues in front of the City Hall. In 1901 Lincoln was joined by Albert Pike, a confederate general whose statue was erected in the triangular reservation between Indiana Avenue, Third, and D streets. On Louisiana Avenue, the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds (OPB&G), in charge of landscaping the city's parks, oversaw the erection of the Temperance Fountain and a memorial to the Grand Army of the Republic in two small parks on the south side of the avenue near the Center Market. The National Bank of Washington upgraded its facility at the corner of Louisiana Avenue and C Street in 1889 with a new Romanesque Revival

⁴ Goode, 197-98.

⁵ Goode, 198.

structure that remains there today.

Gradually, however, Washington's population was moving to the northwest reaches of the city as streetcars allowed residents to live farther and farther from the downtown core. One of these streetcar lines was installed down the center of Indiana Avenue from Judiciary Square to First Street around the 1870s and remained there well into the twentieth century. By the turn of the century, both segments of the avenue were paved with asphalt, concrete, or granite block.

Although the nuisance of the canal had been removed in 1872, the region of the city in the triangle formed by Pennsylvania Avenue, the Mall, and President's Park had become a disreputable neighborhood and a haven for criminals. Called Murder Bay, this area was slated for redevelopment by the Senate Park Commission that was formed in 1901 to draw up a grand scheme for the city. It was not until the 1920s, however, that the buildings in this region were entirely cleared for the new, Neoclassically styled buildings of the Federal Triangle complex. The most drastic revision to L'Enfant's street scheme to date, the construction of Federal Triangle, which lasted until 1939, obliterated the southern half of old Louisiana Avenue. Center Market was demolished in 1931 to make room for the National Archives building. Today, a diagonal sidewalk in the triangular open space on the northwest side of the Archives is the only reminder of the path of the former avenue.

As part of the Federal Triangle complex, the Department of Justice building was erected upon the former right-of-way of Louisiana Avenue, effectively blocking the vista L'Enfant had planned from Judiciary Square to the Washington Monument, although the top of the obelisk can still be seen poking above the red tile roof. In concession to the fact that only half the avenue remained, in 1931 the few remaining blocks were renamed as part of Indiana Avenue and the name Louisiana Avenue was given to a new roadway leading southwest from Union Station to the Mall. A municipal center built near Judiciary Square around this time necessitated demolition of the antebellum rowhouses in Blagdon Row.⁶

In the decades following the Federal Triangle construction, the neighborhood near Indiana Avenue continued to decline, provoking comment from John F. Kennedy during his 1962 inaugural parade. Pennsylvania Avenue redevelopment schemes were initiated in response to Kennedy's observations and, with the transportation projects of the 1960-70s, affected additional changes to Indiana Avenue.

In an effort to revitalize the sagging downtown area, the decayed buildings on the south side of the avenue between Third and Sixth streets, many built before the Civil War, were demolished to make way for more municipal buildings and parking lots.

As part of a large-scale effort to ease traffic flow in the city, a vast freeway network was planned to allow motorists to avoid the congestion of L'Enfant's streets on elevated, limited-access freeways. Although citizen outcry prevented the scheme from being fully realized, the center leg of the I-395 freeway, sunken between Second and Third Streets from the Mall to Massachusetts Avenue, was completed in 1973.

While the freeway was in the planning stages, the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation (PADC) was formed to revitalize the stretch of that

⁶ Goode, 146.

avenue between the Capitol and White House. As part of the plan, a building was proposed in the air rights above the planned center-leg freeway and the former path of Indiana Avenue, to shield Pennsylvania Avenue from the rush of the high-speed traffic. When completed, the freeway and the Department of Labor Building eliminated any semblance of Indiana Avenue between Judiciary Square and First Street. Two building facades flanking First and Second streets that preserve the angle of the former right-of-way are the only reminders of the avenue.

While the earlier incarnation of the Pennsylvania Avenue plan decimated the eastern portion of the avenue, the revised 1974 plan included special treatment to preserve the two blocks of Indiana Avenue that remained between Fifth and Seventh streets. The U. S. Navy Memorial and Market Square building complex was designed to anchor the avenue at the south end, while the remaining nineteenth-century buildings on the north side of the avenue between Fifth and Sixth streets were restored. The Romanesque National Bank of Washington building, now housing the Argentine Naval Commission, was also renovated. The reservations featuring the Grand Army of the Republic Memorial and Temperance Fountain were merged into one and relandscaped. Large planters were installed along the south side of the avenue its entire length between the Temperance Fountain and the Municipal Center in an effort to enliven the streetscape. Two new buildings, 625 Indiana Avenue on the north side and Pennsylvania Plaza on the south side, were erected in the late 1980s as part of PADC's redevelopment.⁷

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. Overall dimensions:

1. Width: 160' from building line to building line.
2. Length within city limits: Approximately 0.1 miles.

B. Elements within the right-of-way:

1. Roadway: The two-lane roadway supports two-way traffic. The road is narrowed at each end to allow for short-term curb parking, and there is a large circular drive in front of Pennsylvania Plaza.
2. Sidewalks and street trees: According to the PADC plan, the roadway was narrowed to permit wide sidewalks, emphasizing this right-of-way as a pedestrian link. On the south side of the avenue, large raised rectangular planters enclosed with iron fences run the length of the avenue between Seventh Street and the Municipal Center. The only other vegetation between building lines are street trees planted in cutouts in the pavement.
3. Smaller reservations: The following list describes the locations of the reservations identified along this avenue by 1894, the date they were first recognized as federal property, the date of transfer, the date of first improvement (if known), and a description of historical and current appearance as of summer 1990.

⁷ PADC, *passim*.

- a. Reservation No. 187: North of the avenue, east of Sixth Street, south of D Street, NW. By 1887 this freestanding triangle was graded and partly improved. Today it is sodded and surrounded by quarter-round coping and a concrete perimeter walk with street trees in cutouts. A line of immature ornamental trees are planted on the north side.
 - b. Reservation No. 188: North of the avenue, west of Third Street, south of D Street, NW. By 1887 this triangular reservation was graded and partly planted, and by 1894 it featured trees and shrubs and was enclosed with a post-and-chain fence. In 1901 a statue of Albert Pike was erected in this reservation, but it was moved in 1972 when the reservations was excavated for Metrorail construction. In 1973 the 1,879-square-foot reservation was transferred to the District of Columbia. The land is now encompassed within the Municipal Center landscape.
 - c. Reservation No. 188A: Center parking between Second and Third streets, NW. Created as a median before 1927, this 12,229-square-foot reservation was transferred to the District of Columbia in 1968.
 - d. Reservation No. 189: South of the avenue, east of Second Street, north of C Street, NW. This triangular reservation was first improved in 1901. In 1968, the 2,152-square-foot parcel was transferred to the District of Columbia.
 - e. Reservation No. 189A: Center parking between First and Second streets, NW. Created as a median before 1927, this 18,650-square-foot reservation was transferred to the District of Columbia in 1968.
4. Larger reservations: See reports for Judiciary Square (HABS No. DC-690) and Market Square (HABS No. DC-691).
- C. Framing elements: The right-of way is clearly framed by the buildings that face onto it. Several three- and four-story historic buildings survive at the southwest end of the avenue, while the rest are modern, maximum-height commercial structures.
- D. Vistas: Views southeast down the avenue from Judiciary Square show the Temperance Fountain and Winfield Scott Hancock Statue at Market Square. Behind that, the National Archives is visible. The Department of Justice Building blocks the view to the Monument Grounds, although the tip of the obelisk can be seen above its roofline.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Maps:

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B. Early Views:

1927: Photographs of Reservation No. 187 (NPS Reservation Files).

1927: Photographs of Reservation Nos. 188, 188A, 189, and 189A (HSW Reservations Collection).

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PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION:

The Plan of Washington, D.C., project was carried out from 1990-93 by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER) Division, Robert J. Kapsch, chief. The project sponsors were the Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation Inc. of Washington, D.C.; the Historic Preservation Division, District of Columbia Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs, which provided Historic Preservation Fund monies; the National Capital Region and its White House Liaison office, NPS; and the National Park Foundation Inc.

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